

NOT DDC  
BRA  
456  
✓

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY ADV. 46-1148

PROPERTY OF  
BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
LIBRARY

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

---

Guidelines for Restoring  
the Townscape of  
Charlestown



North Area/Central Artery

Charlestown  
M 51 DFW  
CDP

City Square is the site of the first settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Colony on Boston Harbor. Since its founding in 1629, the development of City Square has been intimately linked with the development of the City of Boston and the metropolitan area. The physical evolution of the Square has been marked by a series of dramatic changes which today mask much of its earlier history. Elevated highways now dominate what once was the vital center of the Charlestown community.

Proposed highway improvements will again dramatically alter the physical environment of the Square. Plans call for removing the elevated interchange of Route I-93, the Mystic River Bridge, and the Central Artery. The interchange will be reconstructed to the west of I-93, away from Charlestown's residential area. New tunnels running under the Square will connect the interchange with the Mystic River Bridge.

Removing the elevated structure and putting the roadway underground allows for new development of the open land that will result. Seven parcels have been designated, which are described in detail in this report.

This report is divided into two major sections:

1. Criteria and proposals for accomplishing the best possible Townscape. This section describes:

- **Townscape: Standards for Design**  
general criteria used to develop townscape
- **Parcel Description**  
specific development criteria for each parcel
- **A Walking Tour in 1999**  
an intimate view of these specific parcels as developed

2. A strategy for making the Townscape a reality:

- **Development: Strategy for Carrying it Out**  
Land Transfer, Funding Sources
- **Recommended Action**  
Special Commission, Value Capture and Special Zoning District
- **Factual Summary**  
Costs, Jobs, and area information for parcels

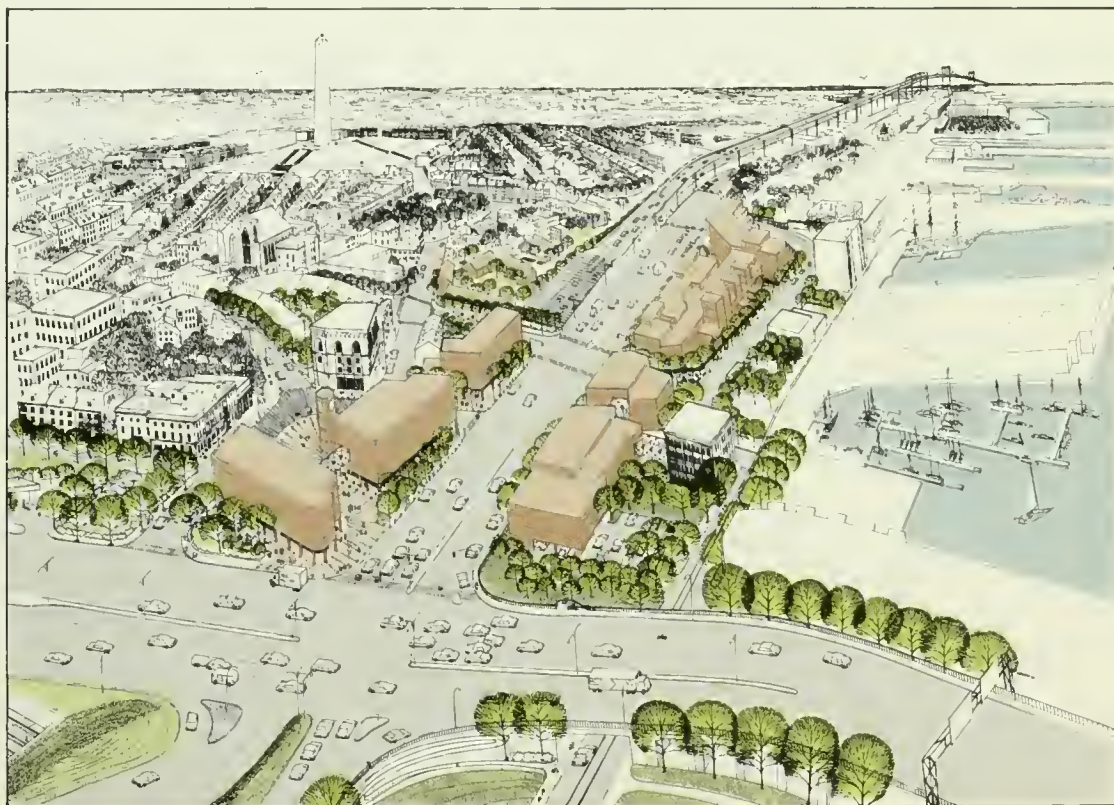


# TOWNSCAPE: STANDARDS FOR DESIGN

The Townscape of the North Area can be compared to a big house with most ceilings open to the sky. It has main rooms (Gate One, City Square), it has more self-contained rooms for various purposes (Parcels), it has corridors (streets and paths), it has an open porch (Hoosac Park), and it has a back yard (Revere Landing Park). It is a place people live in.

The best level of accomplishment will be to make this an inviting home, one with special character. Various portions will come to serve a variety of private enterprises. How each parcel is furnished and decorated on the inside is not so important. But the overall design must be there—to make the most of the available space, to connect the parts in a functional layout, to give spatial cohesion, and to impart an overall sense of place. And a sense of history.

A view of the project area as it might be developed by 1999.

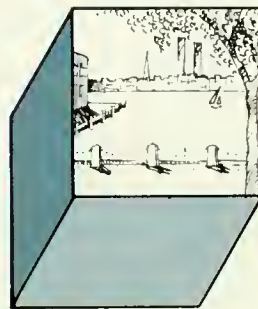
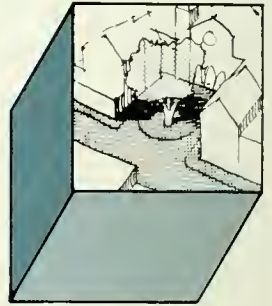


BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

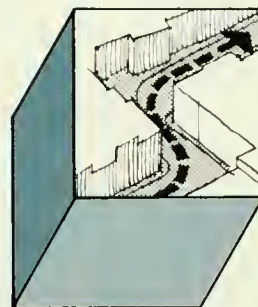
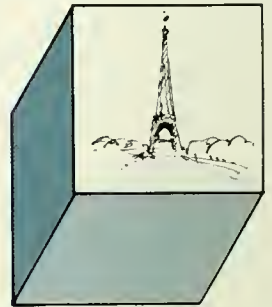
What will give this place character? There are standards of design that must be followed in developing the Townscape. The more general ones are:



**O**rientation An often-found defect in cities and towns is that they are confusing—one gets lost easily, doesn't know where he is. Layout of streets and parcels on this project has been done with this in mind. Criteria below all in one way or another contribute to *orientation*.

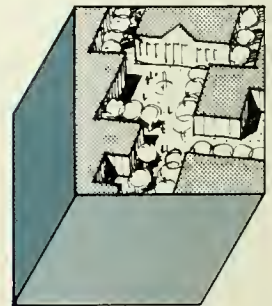


**V**iews Views *out* to Boston and its skyline provide scenes of beauty, and help orientation. Views *into* Charlestown from encircling highways and access roads help reveal its *character* and its *landmarks*, help establish its *image*, and help in finding one's destination. Views *within* Charlestown accomplish all of the above benefits on a localized neighborhood level. This project affords a unique opportunity to develop—and secure—several critical *views*. Accordingly, urban design work has included view analysis and criteria for parcels and streets specify these.



**P**aths Whether circulating by car, bicycle, wheelchair, or on foot, *people* must be the prime consideration. "Paths" in Urban Design language is taken to mean all such lines of movement and modes of transportation. There must be easy "reading" of direction, negotiable grading, adequate separation from conflicting transportation, safe crossings, clear signage, effective illumination, and provisions for comfort.

Paths subordinate to main-line highways can be made more clear and visually pleasing if their edges are well-defined. For example, old Warren Street is made more defined by continuous "walls" of architecture alongside; landscaped edges have for centuries been provided in the form of linear layouts of street trees. These ingredients reinforce *character* and *image*, as further explained below.



**N**odes Nodes are the visual reference points, the key spots on the map. Charlestown is blessed with a basic set of *nodes*, such as: Bunker Hill (Monument Hill), Winthrop Square, Thompson Square, Gate One (U.S.S. Constitution), Shipyard Park (Navy Yard) and the collection of streets at old City Square. The



recommended Urban Design plan shows a strengthening of some of these nodes, such as Gate One, and an *adding* of new nodes, such as a re-constituted City Square, and Massport's public open space at water's edge at Hoosac Pier.

For maximum cohesion and sense of orientation, these nodes are important. They form the junctions and sub-centers by which motorist, tourist, or resident makes use of the town. This in turn reinforces economic development.

**Landmarks** Landmarks in Urban Design are prominent physical features that may (or may not) have symbolic or historic importance. They can take a variety of forms, and may not always be seen as beneficial, but in any case are essential in reinforcing *nodes* and adding to *image*. Some examples of existing landmarks are: U.S.S. Constitution, Bunker Hill Monument, John Harvard Mall, overhead viaduct (however negative the impact), Tobin Bridge. The recommended Urban Design plans show a strengthening of positive landmarks and the creation of a new landmark, an enclosed civic plaza at the new node, City Square.

**Continuity** No new or restored neighborhood should be treated as an island. To the extent possible, one should not even be sure where the Town stops and this project starts. All towns and cities, like people, go through continuous growth and change, but the best examples are those that do not rupture the existing scale, path system, or local flavor.

An example of *lack* of continuity is the Prudential Center or the West End in Boston. An example of effective continuity is the waterfront district along Atlantic Avenue in Boston.

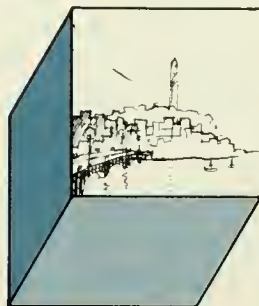
It is recognized that Chelsea Street will continue to interrupt some Charlestown streets. It is also recognized that new development will have to be massive and intense in order to be economically practical. These are threats to continuity. However, the Urban Design plan, comprising the Urban Design Criteria, provides recommendations intended to off-set these threats and to ensure an overall effect of continuity. More detailed study of this in later project phases is indicated.



**Character** A term difficult to define, "character" is nonetheless a popular word applied to urban neighborhoods to mean "an ambient quality" that a place *has* or *doesn't have*. Urban Designers and community residents alike think of specific ingredients that contribute to *character* and apply these to the design process. Some of these are:

- a) Absence of blight: the appearance of sound economic and physical conditions, as at Winthrop Square or Beacon Hill
- b) "Relatable" activity: residential living or shopping or recreation, or "schmoozing"\* rather than hard industry, for example, are activities people can relate to comfortably and these provide a sense of well-being.
- c) Accessibility: ground floors of buildings, property boundaries, and streets must give transparency and visual openness if not direct entering possibilities. A fine example of this is Newbury Street, Boston.
- d) Scale: building masses, street widths, open spaces are organized in a more or less consistent way, free of jarring contrasts of height, bulk, color, etc., as can be found in the Town Hill Historic District and the Back Bay.
- e) Spatial variety: interesting changes of dimension, degree of openness, materials of construction, color, landscape treatment. Examples of this are the Shipyard and the walk from Winthrop Square to Monument Hill.
- f) Architectural quality: interesting well-proportioned buildings having integral style, on well-maintained sites, as in the Town Hill Historic District.

To the extent feasible, these elements of *character* have been built into the Urban Design plans, and are incorporated into the Criteria for Parcels.



**Image** This has two levels of application in Urban Design, a: image as "visual reputation" and b: image as physical form vivid enough to make an impression and be remembered. For example, it can be said that the City Square vicinity today has a negative image (visual reputation), but Town Hill has a strong image (forms a definite positive picture in one's mind).

\*William Whyte, author of "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces" uses the term "schmoozing" to describe impromptu meeting and chatting—usually on sidewalks and in plazas.

What should we expect on each parcel? Before each parcel is released for actual development, detailed requirements will need to be drawn up. This will be the subject of professional service in later stages. However, fundamental criteria are set forth in this report to set the tone for future planning. They appear in the chart for easy reference; a more detailed coverage appears in the Final Report.

## PARCEL ONE

## PARCEL TWO

## PARCEL THREE

### A

#### Size and Location

- 138,085 sq. ft. (3.17 acres)
- Bounded by Gate One, Water, Warren and Chelsea Sts.

- 58,000 sq. ft. (1.35 acres)
- Bounded by Warren, Water and Chelsea Sts.

- 83,635 sq. ft. total (33,635 or .77 acre to be disposed of) 50,000 sq. ft. (1.15 acre) for working use

### B

#### External Influences

- Tourist activity at Gate One
- Dual frontages

- High noise and vibrations
- Maxwell Box Co. blocks some views
- Tunnel along south edge of Chelsea St.

- Noise barrier wall
- Private houses abutting

### C

#### Purpose and Function

- Anchor site
- mixed use: residences, offices, shopping, parking, hotel,

- Mixed use: offices, ground floor retail, possible housing,
- Gateway to project

- Residential use

### D

#### Development Economics

- Parcel can be subdivided
- Up to 440 jobs
- Construction: \$24.4 million

- Up to 500 jobs
- Construction: \$9.5 million
- Could be co-developed with Maxwell Box and/or Rapids

- Easy, flexible development
- Construction: \$1.3 million

### E

#### Intensity of Development

- F.A.R. = 2.0
- 276,000 sq. ft.
- 2-5 stories
- Parking: 320 cars

- F.A.R. = 2.0
- 117,000 sq. ft.
- 5 stories
- Parking: 52 cars

- F.A.R. = 0.5
- 17 units
- 3 stories
- Parking: 24 cars

### F

#### Site Plan Requirements

- One curb cut on Chelsea St.
- One curb cut on Water St.

- Set-back 70' from No. Washington St. bridge
- Set-back 40' from Maxwell Box
- Pedestrian connection to bridge

- Recreational open space min. 20,000 sq. ft.
- Curb cut on Park St.
- Emergency access off Putnam St.

### G

#### Architectural and Landscape Requirements

- Continuous arcade
- Plaza at Gate One
- Mini-plaza at corner of Water and Warren Sts.
- Parking concealed
- Massing scaled down
- Red masonry

- Provide view "break" between City Square and Water St.
- Terraces and trees at west end of site
- Massive scaled down
- Red masonry
- Entrance at bend in Water St.

- Screen planting at wall
- Stress continuity
- Red brick
- Sloped roofs
- Overhangs

## PARCEL FOUR

- 20,000 sq. ft. (.46 acres)
- Bounded by Chelsea, Main, Park and Warren Sts.

- Park St. houses
- Tunnel underneath
- City Square
- Noise & vibration from Chelsea St. and tunnel portal

- Office and retail
- Less flexible site

- Up to 200 jobs
- Construction: \$4.0 million

- F.A.R. = 2.5
- 90% land coverage
- 3-5 stories
- Parking: 14 cars

- Set back from Park St. houses
- Curb cuts on Park & Warren St.

- Solid wall along Chelsea, Main and Warren Sts.
- Step-down profile
- Landscape buffer along rear yard line
- Modest, unassuming facade
- Interesting, inviting ground floor
- Simple roof line

## PARCEL FIVE

- 46,600 sq. ft. (1.07 acres)
- Bounded by Rutherford Ave., Main and Chelsea Sts.

- Gateway location
- Tunnel underneath
- Landmarks: Roughan Hall and Courthouse
- Exposure to highways

- New civic plaza
- Office and retail use
- Visual terminus for Park and Main Sts.
- Visual block to ramps west of Rutherford Ave.
- Historical statement and site for memorials
- MBTA bus stop

- Possible corporate headquarters
- Anchor site
- Up to 375 jobs
- Construction: \$11.0 million

- F.A.R. = 2.0
- 93,000 sq. ft.
- 5 stories
- Parking: none

- Open space shape and size are critical
- One curb cut on Main St.

- Build up to full height
- Interesting ground floor with arcade
- 60 ft. gap for views between buildings
- Monumental elevator tower with clock
- Special pairing for plaza-extend across streets

## PARCEL SIX

- 7,840 sq. ft. (.18 acres)
- Bounded by Harvard & Main Sts. and Rutherford Ave.

- Parking for 14 cars

- Either develop as part of Parcel 5 or as separate public facility

- Due to proximity to City Square thoroughly screen cars with dense shrubbery

## PARCEL SEVEN

- Total 758,379 sq. ft. (17.4 acres)
- 99,317 sq. ft. (2.3 acres) available for recreation
- West of Rutherford Ave.

- New transportation facilities, Rutherford Ave., Boston Sand & Gravel

- Primarily transportation
- Recreational land for 3 tennis courts

- No building development sites

- Trees and shrubbery at selected locations between ramps
- Peripheral trees along Rutherford Ave. and Sandgrav Rd.

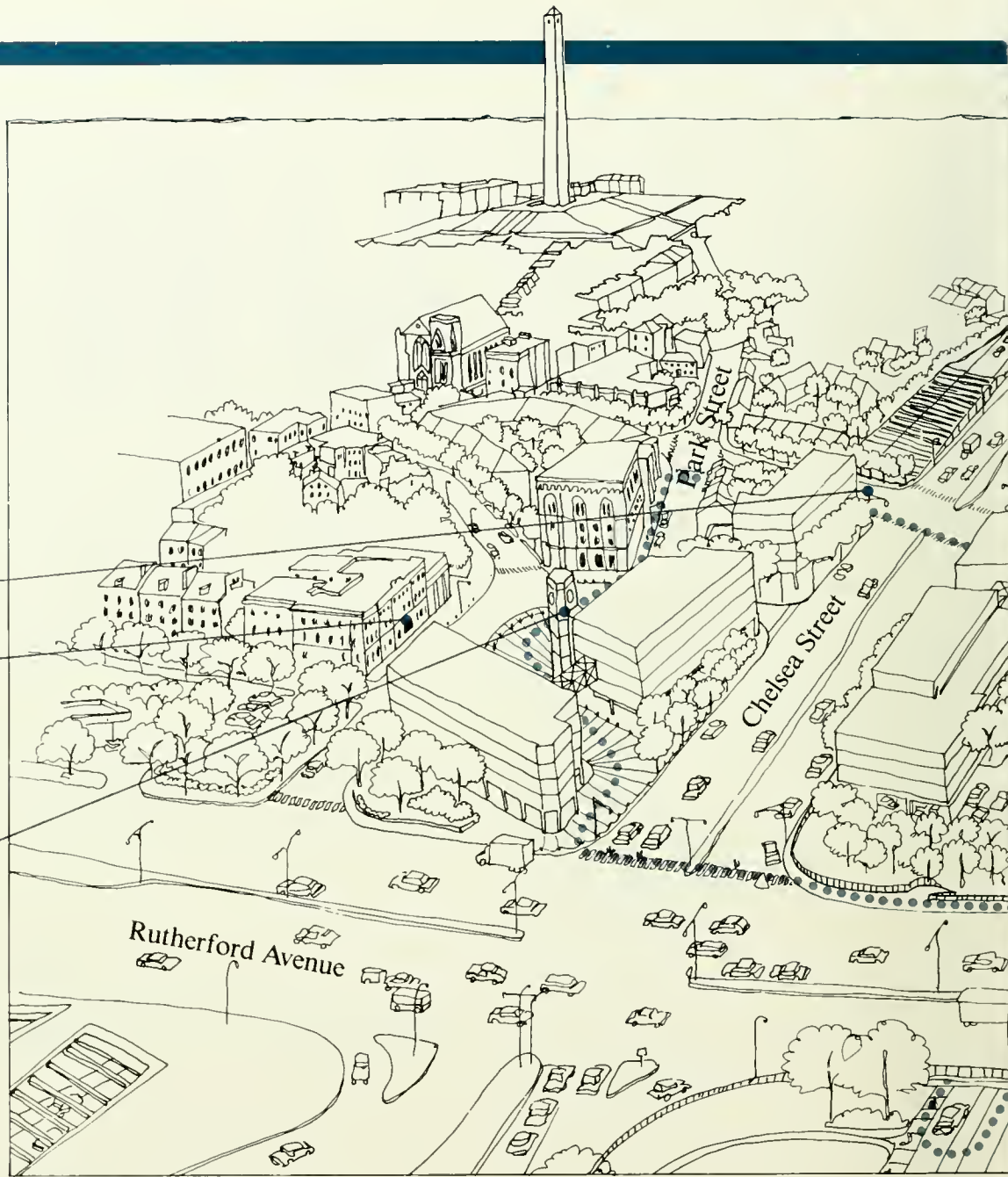


Aerial view of Charlestown with Walking Tour indicated in a dotted line.

Warren Street

Court House

Proposed Tower in new City Square



## A WALKING TOUR IN 1999

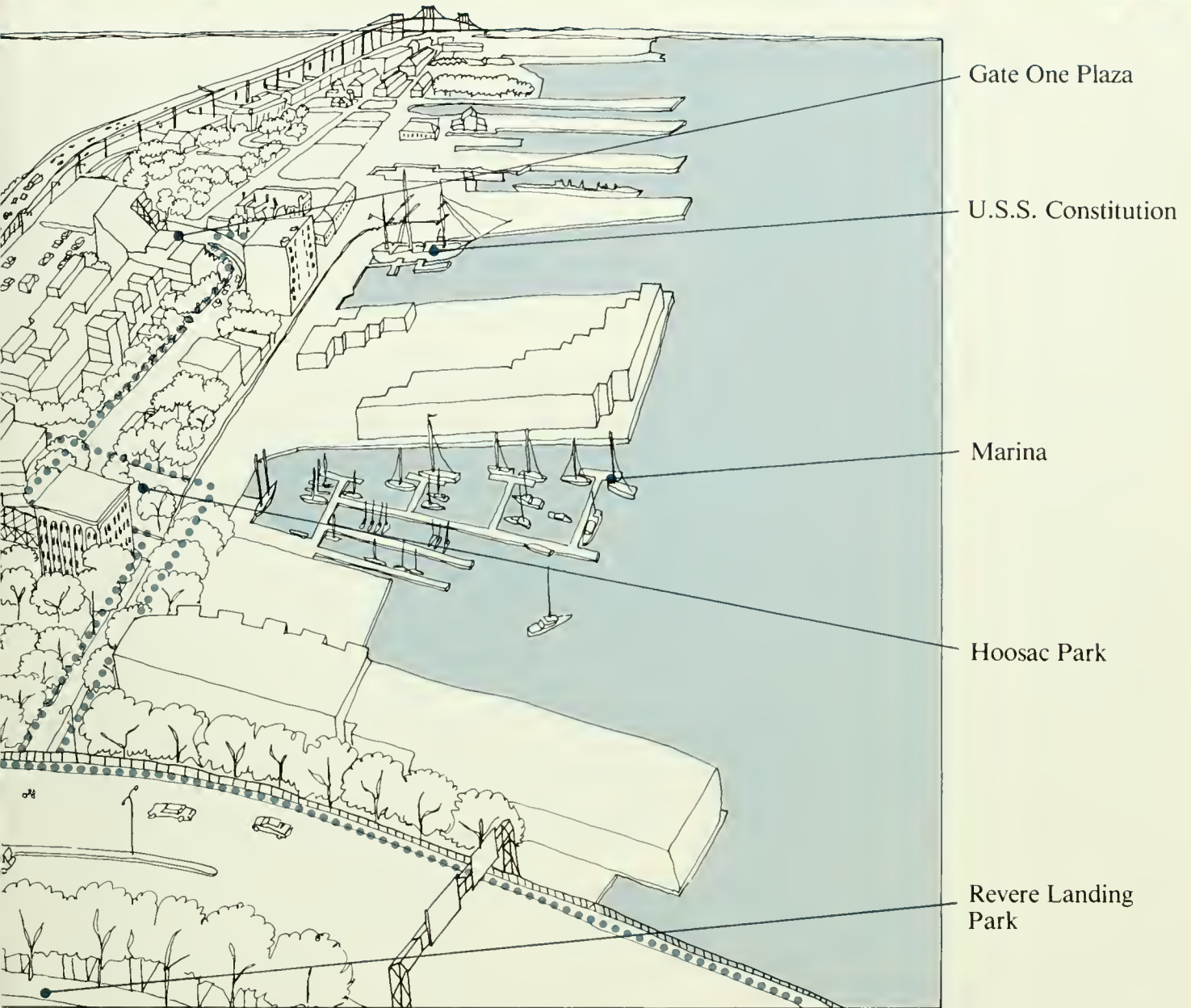
Let's assume all the design standards are applied, and that development actually occurs, say within the next 15-20 years. What would it all look like, and

how would it all hang together?

Let's take a walking tour through the area at that future time.

**N**orth Washington Street Bridge to City Square We leave the water-crossing behind; ahead lies the big intersection. The left side of our view is of highways on various levels, and vehicles in motion. The right side is building walls—first the new Rapids Furniture Building, and next the office building connected to Maxwell Box. ① There are flowering trees at the corner





which immediately offer a counterpoint to the vehicles and hard surfaces.

Now we see through an opening between two five-story buildings at City Square, revealing the facade of the old Courthouse—a contrast between old and new. We see the clock tower, a landmark. With the pedestrian crossing light, we cross Chelsea Street, our view into the

**1** The river is behind us; ahead lies the intersection of Rutherford Avenue and Chelsea Street.



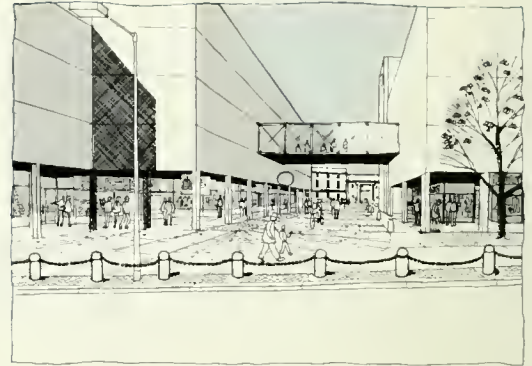
square becoming more intriguing with each step. We glimpse people there, it draws us closer. ②

**C**ity Square We are “squeezed” between the two buildings—the path now a mini-square or vestibule—to the main square ahead. Overhead a glass bridge connects the two buildings—people are crossing over. We move into the Square, and the space opens up dramatically. There are shops, fluttering flags, a radial pattern of cobbles under foot, people gathered around a memorial plaque, sunning themselves on benches. This feels like an outdoor room, with the old Courthouse and Roughan Hall helping to enclose it. It is reminiscent of the old days, when City Square was a centralized collection point for the carriage trade. The plaza is big enough to accommodate lots of people and sunshine, but closed in enough to feel like a definite place. ③

Walking in the direction of Roughan Hall, we see the bus shelter built-in under the building on our right—it’s part of the arcaded row of storefronts. Beyond this, we can see across Chelsea Street, and through the break in the new office building over there we catch a glimpse of the marina, boat masts, and a narrow piece of the skyline of the North End. ④

**C**ity Square to Warren Street We cross the street, with the interesting pavement pattern extending all the way to the beginning of Park Street. Heading into Park Street, we feel squeezed again between Roughan Hall on our left, and the new office building on our right. The ground-floor shops on each side attract our attention. Now at the old Park Street residences,

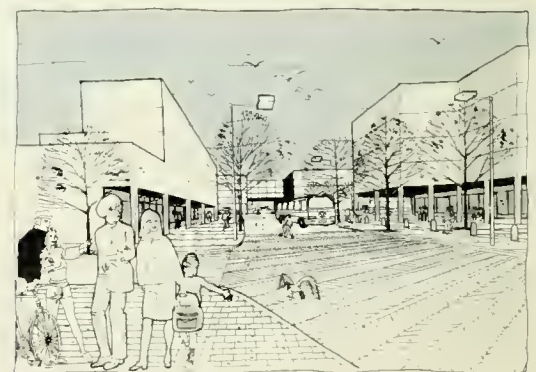
**2** We see through an opening into City Square, with the court house in view.



**3** We’ve arrived at a special place—people, action, old buildings opposite new ones, interesting, historic.



**4** Looking out from City Square toward the waterfront.







**5** At Park and Warren, we look back at City Square with its tower. . .



**6** . . . a mews behind the Park Street houses with parked cars concealed. . .



**7** . . . across Warren Street there's a sculptured sun-screen for the tunnel below. . .



**8** . . . down Warren Street toward the water.

we see some of the vintage Charlestown revealed in its architecture. And beyond, we see Winthrop Square and the top of the Bunker Hill monument.

Stopping at Warren Street, we wheel around and see back into City Square, accented by its tower. It is a framed picture that closes out the elevated highways beyond. Just to the north of us are the new red-brick walk-up apartments built behind Roughan Hall and extending across what used to be Henley Street. ⑤

Looking to the right, across Warren Street, is the unbroken red-brick facade of the new houses, with their interesting architectural features of rhythmical windows and doors, overhanging upper stories, and pitched roofs. Not old-fashioned architecture, but a style that fits in.

**D**own Warren Street to Water Street We walk on the extra-wide sidewalk in front of the "Sweet Potato" (there is a large drain pipe under us), toward the intersection. On our right is the driveway leading into an attractive landscaped "mews" between the new office building and the backs of the old Park Street residences. It is full of cars, but they are well-screened. The office building is actually five stories high where it fronts on Chelsea Street but doesn't overwhelm the residences because it steps down to three stories. ⑥

Straight ahead, through the intersection, we see the open view to the water again, this time in a little more detail. There are boats in the foreground and the Old North Church tower in the distance, showing how close we are to the downtown center of Boston. ⑦

Across Warren Street to the left we see the rising walls of the tunnel down-ramp, with its sun-screen top. To soften the effect, there is dense planting of trees and shrubs in a raised planter that doubles as a bench. ⑧

At the pedestrian-crossing signal, we begin the rather long crossing of Chelsea Street, a major channel of space for cars and trucks. A divider in the middle gives us a safe resting point. Arriving at the other side, the view to the waterfront



appears even wider. Besides Old North Church, we see on the skyline the multiple colors of the North End and the ⑨ shapes of Harbor Towers against the sky.

This view is framed by new buildings. On the right, a rather plain five-story wall of red brick—an office building with repetitive windows. On the left side of the street another office building that steps back as it goes up, and seems rounded at the next corner, so as to draw our attention to the east. We see down a slight slope to that corner, where the sidewalk widens into a small plaza. Another arcade begins there—the Water Street retail arcade.

## **A** cross the Intersection to the Hoosac Park

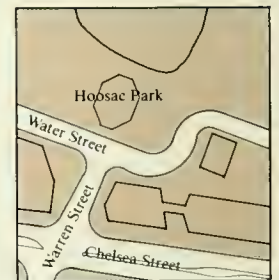
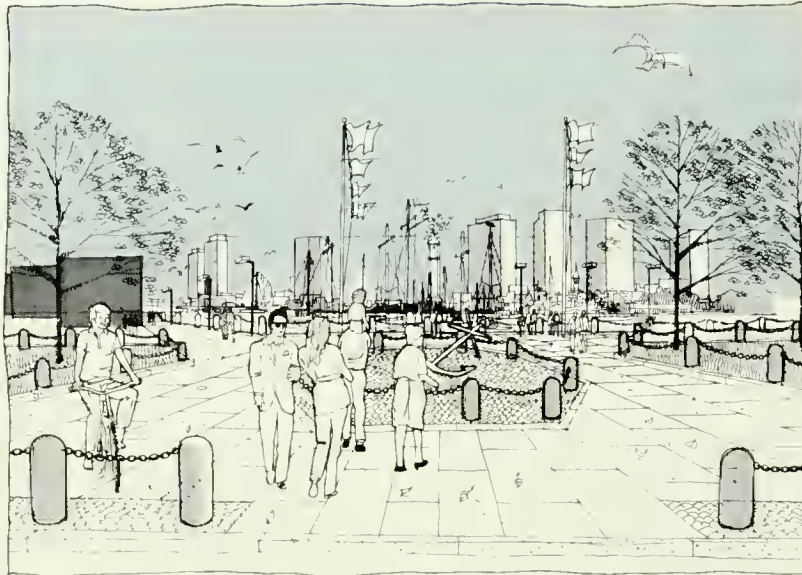
Moving ahead to the intersection at Water Street, we come to that small plaza, made up of brick paving and shrubbery, benches and a pedestrian-scaled lamp post. Crossing the street, we confront the far edge of Water Street—it is a screen of bollards and trees that shunts vehicles to the left or right, but lets us walk through. ⑩

We pass onto a plaza paved with granite cobblestones. Unlike City Square, this place is not tightly enclosed by buildings, but is more like a viewing platform at water's edge. To the left sits the recent office building on Hoosac Pier, owned

**9** Farther down Warren, we sense a build-up. . .



**10** . . . the Hoosac Park, where the visual “funnel” opens to the Boston skyline. . .

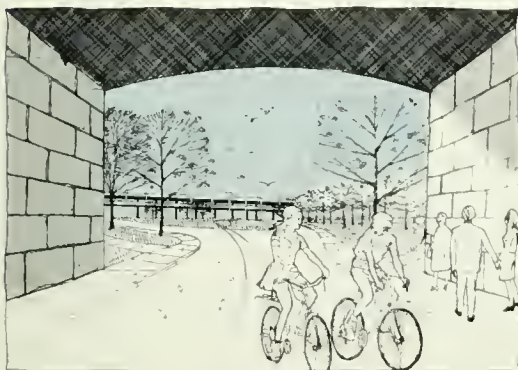


**11** . . . boats and people and landscape in the foreground.





**12** We head toward Revere Landing Park. . .



**13** . . . under the bridge and into the park. . .



**14** . . . we return along Water Street and look around the corner of Maxwell Box, through another opening that reveals City Square. . .



**15** . . . we follow Water Street and meet Warren; an arcade and promenade lie ahead.

by Massport. To the right lies an open parking area serving the bustling marina before us. Nautical sounds and salt air surround the locals and the visitors, the brown-baggers and the Freedom Trail folks, resting, schmoozing, watching various water activities, which may include the Charlestown Boy's Club boat race. Here the view to the Boston skyline is rich and detailed—one can now see the Custom House Tower, and cars back on the bridge. This is a special place, close to the original Town landing. It is today the community's only real gathering spot on the waterfront. <sup>(11)</sup>

**H**oosac Park to Revere Landing Park  
Getting up to leave, we catch a <sup>(12)</sup> glimpse to the west—and the visual come-on of Revere Landing Park. We follow the lure, rejoin Water Street, pass Maxwell Box on our right, Rapids on the left, the geometry of the arched opening ahead forming an inviting portal. Under the bridge we are “squeezed” again—it feels dark and cool—then we break out into the green open space of the park. Here one can walk across the dam back to North Station, or mount <sup>(13)</sup> the winding ramp back up to the bridge.

**R**evere Landing Park to Gate One  
Reversing our direction, back through the arch, passing Maxwell Box on our left, we take the bend in the street, going around Hoosac Park. Here we have a view through the new office building and can glimpse City Square. <sup>(14)</sup>

At the corner of Warren, we cross over into the Water Street arcade with the long row of trees. This forms a definite promenade with rhythms of columns and tree trunks marking our movement. <sup>(15)</sup>



Within the arcade are bright and colorful shop windows, interspersed with an entrance to offices above, and later on an entrance to apartments above. ⑩

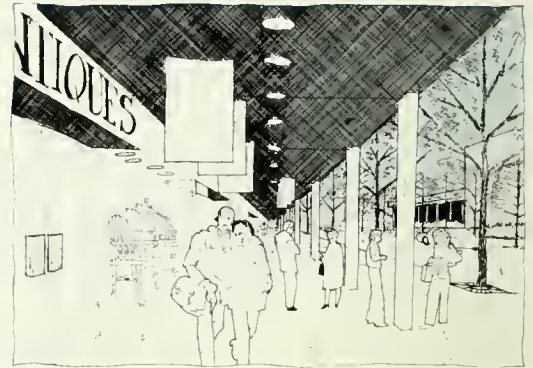
Meanwhile, we can look across the street and see at intervals some open views out toward water, toward the harbor, and East Boston. Over there is Raytheon's Bunker Hill Pavilion where they continue the popular show "The Whites of Their Eyes."

We arrive at a break in the arcade, a car entrance to the hotel and to the parking garage inside. This time we feel a ⑪ slight "squeeze" as we pass between the 5-story hotel and the old Chocolate Factory. Then, the space opens up. We have arrived at Gate One. ⑫

**Gate One** This place is another large, enclosed outdoor room with a wide, curving street running through. We see busses dropping off and picking up passengers. Beyond are the imposing masts and rigging of the U.S.S. Constitution. Straight ahead is ⑬ the gate leading into the Shipyard, now home to some 3000 people. Looking ⑭ leftward, we see the historic shipyard wall, the rising ramp of the Tobin Bridge and the towering image of the Bunker Hill Monument. Below, we see the walkway one takes to the monument. Around us, we see the landscaped plaza framed on two sides by the stepping walls of the hotel. In this outdoor room the bustle ⑮ of pedestrians and movement of busses combine with the clutches of people in the outdoor cafe, in the park-like green space, around the souvenir vendors and in front of the big historical map-board—adding to the sense that we are in an important place that lives and breathes.

We could go on—for the continuity has been established and the paths keep going. But we've finished our tour of the new area and have seen how it all fits together. Let us now turn back to the reality of what we must do to bring this about.

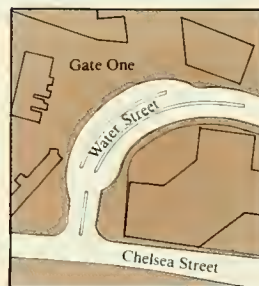
**16** We move through the arcade, interesting shops under cover, the Bunker Hill Pavillion seen across the street. . .



**17** . . . we come to the hotel entrance, glimpsing the masts of the U.S.S. Constitution. . .



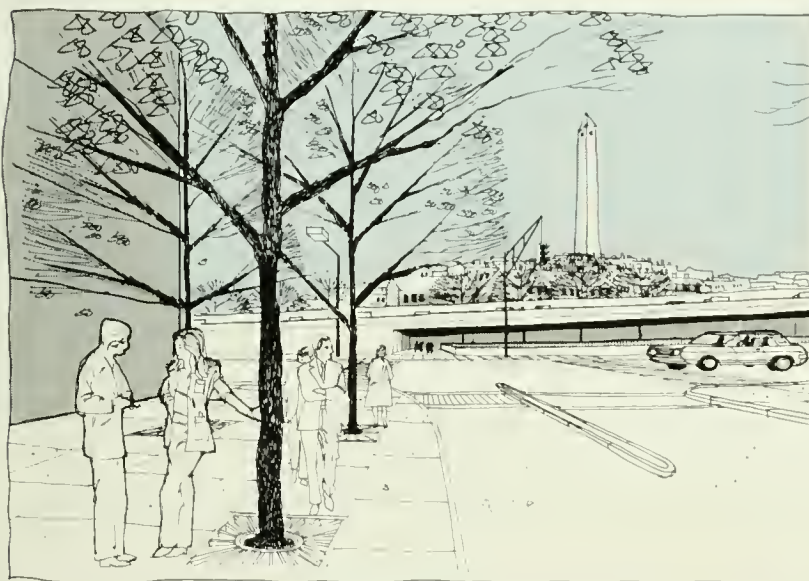
**18** . . . we are "squeezed" between the old chocolate factory on our right and the new hotel on our left.



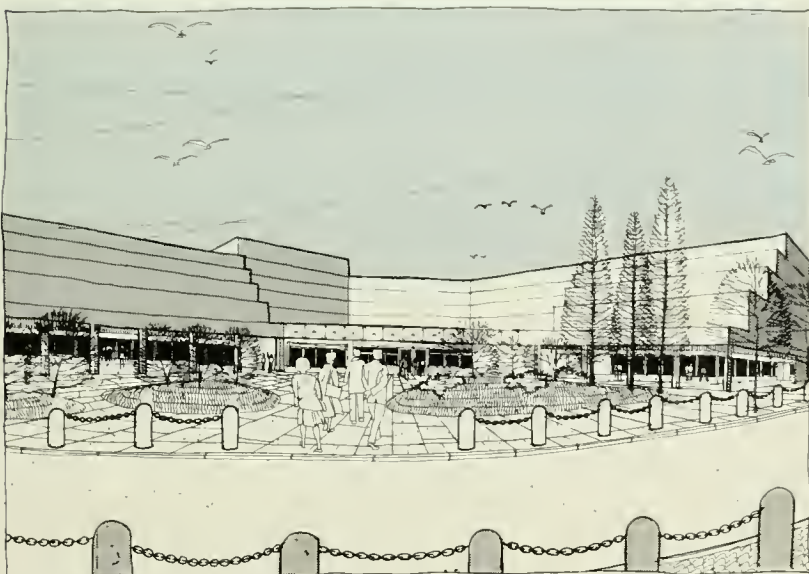




**19** Here we arrive at a wide plaza, setting for Gate One. . .



**20** . . . looking to our left we see the path continue under the Tobin Bridge downramp, the Bunker Hill Monument beyond. . .



**21** . . . and here is the hotel, framing the plaza, enclosing us, helping this place to seem important.

A view of City Square as it appeared in the 1890's, with the new City Hall and the Waverly House hotel dominating the architecturally well-defined plaza. City Square served both as a place of business and a cross-road for horse-drawn, vehicles en route between Boston and points north.





# DEVELOPMENT: STRATEGY FOR CARRYING IT OUT

Once highway improvements have been completed and parcels of land laid out, a new cast of characters will be needed, and a unique activity called "development" will hopefully get underway. Instead of a predominantly *public* function as before, with only incidental interest by private parties, the development phase becomes a predominantly *private* function, facilitated by public action. But how to facilitate it? This part of the Community Development Plan attempts to show how the development process can be started. Such issues as how to transfer the land, how to pay for the pre-development phase, and how to ensure implementation of community goals, are dealt with below.

**V**arious Ways to Transfer the Land  
Transferring of land is not just a legal and financial process, it is an important public responsibility. Serving the best interests of the local community must be balanced with needs of the region and state. A process of competitive selection of developers must be organized and administered. Stand-

ards of fairness must be set and strictly adhered to. Criteria for physical site development must be communicated and enforced to ensure high quality and lasting value of the newly-formed environment. In support of these functions, it will be critical to put the land in the hands of a body capable of raising funds and commanding support of a wide collection of interests. The uniqueness of this place and its significant economic potential require careful consideration of whether an agency other than the Mass. Department of Public Works should take over. Let's consider the possibilities:

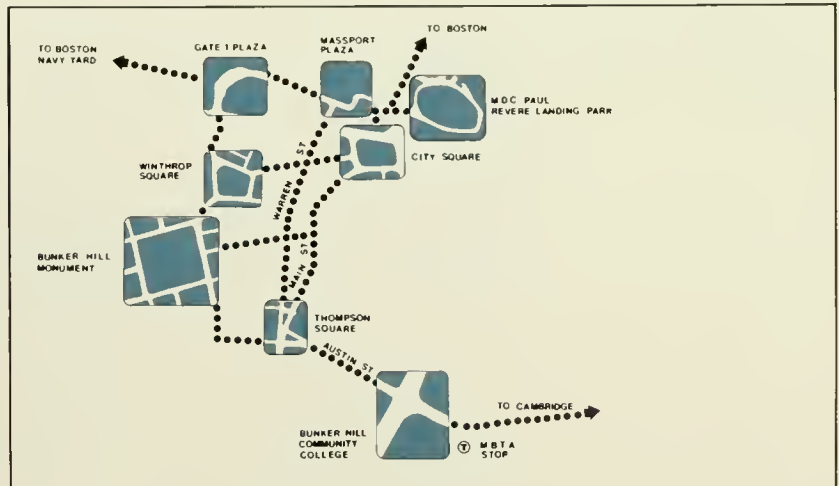
**1. Mass. D.P.W.** The Department will in any case take initial possession of all project land in order to carry out the highway improvements. They normally do not function beyond this level, except for maintaining the highways—getting involved in development is not part of the Department's normal role. However, given these special problems of elaborate urban highways interlaced with urban parcels, it might be logical for D.P.W. to undertake to bring in the experts it lacks and orchestrate the process. There would be the advantages of continuity, a long-standing commitment, the status of a state agency, and no need for an additional "middle-man" in transference of land. While indications are that the Department does not presently have an

## Pedestrian Circulation

Diagram shows lines of pedestrian movement and connections between both new and existing nodes (junctions, open plazas, etc.)

... Paths  
(Pedestrian  
Circulation)

■ Nodes  
(Public  
Spaces)





**“The economic benefit . . . to the Charlestown community would be a tremendous boost in appealing to private business investment.”**

Senator Paul Tsongas

interest in such an expanded role, it would be a major policy decision for the Department to consider.

## **2. Boston Redevelopment Authority**

Its power of eminent domain would not be needed, but its experience in design review and developer selection, as well as in zoning administration would be invaluable. As a City agency, it could easily coordinate the interests and relevant functions of sister agencies. It would have to essentially abandon its own early plans for Charlestown which have remained largely neglected for want of priority and funding. What the powers and functions of BRA will be several years from now is unclear, although it has organizational life under state law. Without the impetus of a substantial funding base, it is difficult to imagine B.R.A. in a primary role.

## **3. Neighborhood Development Agency**

An agency of the current city administration, this organization could bring some of the same practical advantages and professionalism brought by BRA. However, its present jurisdiction seems unclearly defined, and there is no way at this time to predict its potential for taking the lead.

## **4. Local Community Development**

**Corporation** In such places as Buffalo, Minneapolis, and here in Boston can be found organizations of business people

and private citizens formed for purposes of taking the lead in neighborhood revitalization and development. Typically enjoying vital political endorsements and sources of funds from bankers or philanthropists or federal or state agencies, such organizations have in the past been able to offer a unique blend of grass roots energy and professional sophistication. The latter usually depends on experienced planners and administrators hired with back-up staffing capable of dealing with the day-to-day complexities of the process. Naturally the cost of sustaining such an organization can be considerable, so funding is of paramount importance. If the commitment of significant time and energy can be marshalled among local citizens, this type of entity can provide a strong focus on community goals. But realities of development demand every-day professional work.

In the consultant's opinion, existing organizations are not by themselves likely to measure up to the criteria for successful directing of the development process. Instead, a newly-created organization is suggested.

**V**arious Ways to Finance Development Amenities and landscape improvements, are due to budgetary necessity, all but excluded from the basic highway improvement project. The Final Report calls for approximately

### **Existing Charlestown Textures**

Diagram showing how continuity has been broken in the Chelsea Street area. Building footprints are shown in brown; streets, ramps and empty lots in white.



1½% of the total budget to be spent for street planting and a modest plaza at City Square. But other improvements in public spaces are needed:

- Brick sidewalks on Warren Street, Water Street, and the part of Chelsea Street between City Square and Warren Street
- Additional planting at "accent points" such as the corner of Warren and Water Streets, Warren and Park Streets
- Street furniture, including benches, trash receptacles, supplemental lighting
- Tourist information graphics
- Recreation facilities such as the tennis courts on Parcel Seven and an optional tot-lot in the fragmented residual land of Parcel Three

Funds for these amenities must be raised from other sources.

At this writing, such reliable old sources as Urban Renewal Community Development Block Grants, and Economic Development grants (EDA) are not available, and no new major funding sources from any level of government have been proposed to take their place.

There are presently some secondary-level funds that offer partial assistance. These are:

**1. Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG)** a program that is funded

through 1983. This provides low-interest lending under City auspices for construction where substantial private financing is already available for at least ⅔ of the costs, and where there are clear public benefits of employment or other assistance to minority or low-income people.

**2. National Endowment for the Arts** provides matching grants to non-profit organizations and local and state governments for planning and architectural design. Emphasis is on civic design and beautification of urban spaces, and may include support for design of plazas, parks, street furnishings, signage, lighting, and public buildings.

**3. Tax relief**, especially for a so-called 121A Corporation, which establishes payments to the City in lieu of taxes, based upon a negotiated relationship to business income actually materializing out of the development.

**4. Possible new tax practices**, such as incremental taxation (practiced in Memphis), whereby the City offers short-term assistance (10–15 years) based on the expectation of increased valuation and tax revenues in the future.

**5. Other creative arrangements**, such as long-term leasing of the land, that might open up tax incentives to private developers.


At present, it appears that the subsidy approach is fast becoming a thing of the

**“... eliminating a very dangerous traffic condition ... addressing genuine historic preservation needs, and encouraging economic and community development. . .”**

Speaker Thomas O'Neill



Diagram showing how urban design criteria can lead to reconstruction of Charlestown texture and character.

-  Visual Cone
- Park
- Node
- Existing Buildings
- Proposed Buildings

## Urban Design Opportunities



past, and that new coalitions of public and private funding will be emerging before the North Area is ready for development.

There is one fundamental fact underlying all options: the land created by this project is a new-found commodity with its own market value. The conversion of this value to dollars or in-kind benefits is known as *Value Capture*. This is addressed in the recommendations below.

## RECOMMENDED ACTION

At this time the consultant can only project future market conditions and financing methods. Therefore, specific approaches to financing North Area development cannot be recommended, but must await later-stage study. At this time the most promising strategy now appears to be:

- Create a special Commission
- Employ Value Capture
- Establish a Special Zoning District

**1. Special Commission:** Should D.P.W. elect not to manage the pre-development phase, a special commission (Charlestown Development Commission) should be created at the state level. The Commission's purpose would be to facilitate

community development—*within* the transportation framework already established under the direction of the Department of Public Works. A relatively modest commitment of state funds would provide for staff. It is suggested that a board consisting of representatives from the Charlestown community, City of Boston, D.P.W., Massport, U.S. Department of the Interior, M.D.C. and the private sector would establish policy. This should *not* preclude the formation of a community development entity, which could participate over a range of possible roles, from that of developer of specific sites, for example City Square, to that of mere representation on the Charlestown Development Commission. The principal advantages of a state-level commission are immediate funding of its own activities, and immediate power to bring together the diverse elements having an interest in the successful execution of the project.

The Commission should be a “sunset” organization, whose life ends with the completion of development and public space improvements. This sensible limitation worked well with the Government Center Commission in Boston some years ago.

**2. Value Capture** Because of the shortage of funds to pay for vital amenities accompanying the highway improve-

### Vehicular Circulation

Map showing proposed streets and direction of traffic.

- Ⓢ Traffic Signal
- ↓ Traffic Direction





ments, the D.P.W. should transfer the land at no cost to the new Commission. In turn, the Commission would have responsibility for raising capital through the sale of the land, and to the extent necessary, for raising additional funds at the state level. Value Capture objectives should also include consideration of pricing land at levels capable of attracting private investment.

**3. Special Zoning District** A map in this report shows the proposed boundaries of a *Special Zoning District*. It is an “overlay” of the existing zoning map, in which the comprehensive nature of community development is recognized and implemented. Important features of the existing Zoning Ordinance would be retained, such as maximum building height and overall land use. But vital issues such as density and parking could be dealt with more creatively, and adjustment of requirements to meet the limitations of each parcel could be made without cumbersome formal appeals procedures. The “Planned Unit Development” concept, long practiced in many jurisdictions, serves as a model for this. Political resistance is not likely, provided the City of Boston remains involved in the process and retains its powers of zoning control.

**How to use this Community Development Plan** Like a newly-hatched bird, this Plan is a concept with wings attached. The basic parts are there, (thanks to dedicated efforts of many) but much nurturing and further work is needed before it can fly. Indeed, further discussion about *methods* is in order.

Once the highway infrastructure is in place, there will be either a community stagnation, a rampage of careless profiteering, or an intelligent, well-integrated development with benefits for all.

Strictly speaking, the Department of Public Works will have done their job, and the transportation goals will have been successfully met. A *new energy, new commitment* must arise to make this Plan fly.

A perusal of the Factual Summary should leave little doubt as to the economic potential. When combined with the views, paths, nodes, the cobblestones and trees,—in short, a character compatible with old Charlestown—the prospects for community development are thrilling!

In order to move the process in the right direction, the respective roles of the Department of Public Works and the North Area Task Force should be extended in an on-going partnership—to take the lead in implementing this Community Development Plan.

**“... substantial benefits resulting from the current City Square plan include . . . millions of dollars in planned private investment and the related employment and tax base increases.”**

Governor Ed King



**Zoning Plan**  
Zoning with special district permitted land uses defined by the City of Boston Zoning Ordinance showing the proposed Special District boundary.

Commercial

Industrial

Residential

■ Special District

# FACTUAL SUMMARY

Property of  
BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
Library

## Land Area, Entire Project

### Land Area by Parcels:

Parcel One	138,085
Parcel Two	58,000
Parcel Three	83,635
Parcel Four	20,000
Parcel Five	46,600

Sub Total 346,320  
(7.95 acres)

Parcel Six	7,840
Parcel Seven	758,379

**Total 1,112,539 sq. ft.**  
**(25.54 acres)**

## Building Construction Area by Parcels

Parcel One	276,000
Parcel Two	117,000
Parcel Three	25,600
Parcel Four	50,000
Parcel Five	93,000

**Total 561,600 sq. ft.**

## Number of Jobs Projected, by Parcel

Parcel One: 440
Parcel Two: 500
Parcel Three: —
Parcel Four: 200
Parcel Five: 375
<b>Total: 1,515</b>

## Building Construction Costs (1982) by Parcel

Parcel One	\$24,400,000.
Parcel Two	\$ 9,500,000.
Parcel Three	\$ 1,300,000.
Parcel Four	\$ 4,000,000.
Parcel Five	\$11,000,000.

**Total \$50,200,000.**

## Constructed Use, by Parcels

	Office	Residence	Retail	Hotel	Recreation	Parking
Parcel One	60,000	35,000	20,000	160,000	—	320
Parcel Two	110,000	—	7,000	—	—	44
Parcel Three	—	23,000	3,600	—	20,000	24
Parcel Four	45,000	—	5,000	—	—	14
Parcel Five	85,000	—	8,000	—	—	—
Parcel Six	—	—	—	—	—	14
Parcel Seven	—	—	—	—	99,317	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>300,000</b>	<b>58,000</b>	<b>38,600</b>	<b>160,000</b>	<b>119,317</b>	<b>416 cars</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>29%</b>		





Illustrative Plan of the City Square area, showing proposed highways and local streets, together with parcels as they might be improved by private developers.

M51 DPW

CDP

Community Development

Author

Guidelines Charlestown

Title

Date

Issued to

Prepared for:  
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Transportation and  
Construction  
Department of Public Works

In cooperation with:  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration  
Consultant team headed by:  
Louis Berger and Associates Inc.

This report prepared by:  
CBT/Childs Bertman Tseckares &  
Casendino Inc.

Property of  
BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
Library

**“ . . . What controls do we have over development here . . . will the land be developed appropriately? ”**

Task Force Comment